

Updating Newtown's Plan of Conservation and Development

PUBLIC PLANNING WORKSHOP March 8, 2003

WORKSHOP TOPIC #1

Improve the Newtown Vision Statement

Introduction

The Draft Vision Statement follows:

Newtown is a picturesque rural town which remains sparsely populated as compared to its neighboring towns. This is the result of a concerted effort to control development, maintain open space and protect scenic areas. The Town is primarily a residential community with a variety of styles of homes for residents at different stages of life and with different economic capabilities. Newtown has a wide range of recreation opportunities meeting the interests of most of its citizens. The town has been environmentally active in protecting its aquifer, wetlands and other ecologically sensitive areas. To accomplish this, it has developed numerous and innovative means to protect these areas as well as created large sections of open space.

The design and maintenance of all properties (residential, town owned, stores and larger commercial businesses) have focused on architecture and landscaping which is consistent with the town's view of itself as a rural and historic town.

However, in addition, Newtown has also succeeded in attracting a limited number of large commercial and clean industrial businesses which blend in well with the town character and help moderate the property tax rate.

Vision Strategies For Newtown's Future:

1. Control Growth
2. Protect Natural Resources
3. Maintain a Picturesque Town
4. Support Recreation Opportunities
5. Support Housing Diversity
6. Attract Commercial Business
7. Manage Traffic

The following summarizes the Issues, Goals and Strategies that have been discussed for this topic:

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

ISSUE #1: Newtown's Pastoral and Rural Landscape

1. The visual character of Newtown's pastoral and rural landscape, including open fields, stonewalls, ponds and streams, country lanes, forested areas, etc., makes a valued contribution to Newtown's Community Character;
2. Newtown's pastoral and rural landscape is altered one lot at a time, as undeveloped land is subdivided and built upon;
3. Some views of Newtown from State highways form lasting images of the Town's natural beauty and contribute to the Town's perceived community character;
4. The points of entry into Newtown from Brookfield, Bethel, Monroe and Southbury, as well as from I-84 interchanges 9, 10 and 11, provide initial impressions of Newtown's Community Character.

Goal *Maintain the scenic characteristics of Newtown's "Pastoral and Rural Areas," and "Image Corridors" and enhance the "Gateways" to Newtown.*

Strategies:

1. Residential development fronting on town roads within identified "Pastoral or Rural" areas should be sited so as to create a visual buffer from the public realm;
2. Development occurring within identified "Pastoral and Rural Areas" or visible from identified "Image Corridors" should be encouraged to use "conservation" / "open space" subdivision design;
3. Pursue the use of design standards for the maintenance, upgrading and construction of town roads that contribute to the preservation of the pastoral and rural characteristics of Newtown's natural landscape and create a public realm that enhances the character of the areas served;
4. Expand the Town's Scenic Road Program to help preserve the pastoral, rural and scenic characteristics of Newtown's landscape;
5. Consider utilizing the State's Scenic Road Program to help protect the scenic qualities of State highways within identified "Image Corridors;"
6. Upgrade development siting and landscaping at Newtown's "Gateways" to enhance the initial visual impression of the Town;
7. Encourage the elimination of overhead utility lines.

ISSUE #2: Newtown's Borough and Hamlets

1. The Borough is the historic center of Newtown and contributes significantly to the Town's community character;
2. Each of Newtown's four mixed-use hamlets (Botsford, Dodgingtown, Hawleyville and Sandy

Hook) contribute in different ways to the character of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Goal: *Preserve the mixed-use functions and enhance the visual appearance of Newtown's Borough and Hamlets.*

Strategies:

1. Support Borough efforts to pursue the utilization of Village District regulations to coordinate development activities that enhance the appearance of the Borough and improve pedestrian mobility;
2. Support community efforts to revitalize and beautify the historic, mixed-use Sandy Hook hamlet, in a pedestrian friendly manner;
3. Continue the implementation of the adopted plan for Hawleyville;
4. Pursue efforts to protect vacant lands surrounding the Borough and Newtown's four hamlets so as to preserve the historic settlement pattern of mixed-use villages and hamlets surrounded by open land;
5. Support actions which will enhance the appearance and mixed-use functions of Newtown's hamlets.
6. Create and adopt design guidelines for future development.

ISSUE #3: The Public Realm

1. The quality of the public realm created by town buildings, parks and monuments, strongly influences the perception of Newtown's community character and the sense of community pride;

Goal: *Enhance the public realm's contributions to Newtown's Community Character.*

Strategies:

1. When constructing town owned buildings and upgrading existing town facilities, pursue a siting and design strategy that will enhance the public's perception of Newtown's community character;
2. Integrate new municipal facilities into the fabric of the surrounding neighborhood;
3. Consider the co-location of municipal facilities, such as parks associated with schools or other public buildings, to create community activity centers and provide additional opportunities for community interaction.

For additional reference information for the discussion of the Vision Statement, please refer to the Development Patterns and Trends and Demographic Overview planning memoranda.
(<http://www.newtownct.org/PlanElements.ivnu>)